

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed April 9, 2001, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner enter the above amendments and consider the following remarks. A marked-up version of the changes is attached hereto. The Applicant has distinguished claims 1-20 over the cited references, and new claims 21-23 have been added. As a result, claims 21-23 are still pending in the application. The Applicant respectfully requests further examination and reconsideration of the application in light of the amendments and accompanying remarks.

Rejection of Claims 1-20 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejected claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lewis in view of Lamp. The Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. The Applicant respectfully maintains the position that the references cannot be combined as suggested by the Examiner.

The bulkhead of Lewis will not be suitable for its intended purpose if modified as suggested by the Examiner. In Lewis, it is critical that the neck 32 is in the same position relative to the gap 29 in both the planar and perpendicular positions, i.e., the position of the neck does not change if the connecting bead 30 is inverted. This aspect of Lewis is explained in column 5, lines 17-20. In the modification proposed by the Examiner, this would not be true.

The modification proposed by the Examiner would result in a joint between the socket 20 and the bead 30 that is sloppy in at least one orientation. In addition, it is more than likely that the sloppy joint between the socket 20 and the bead 30 would render the panels too weak to be used for the intended purpose as a bulkhead. The

Applicant respectfully submits that there is no teaching or suggestion in the references as to how the panels can be modified as suggested by the Examiner while still maintaining the functionality of the panels.

Therefore, the Applicant respectfully submits that Lewis in view of Lamp cannot support the rejection of claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

New Claims 21-23

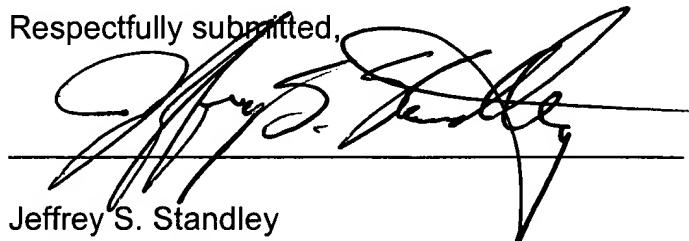
The Applicant has added new claims 21-23 to claim another novel aspect of the present invention. The Applicant respectfully submits that the cited references do not teach or suggest claims 21-23.

CONCLUSION

The Applicant has distinguished claims 1-20 over the cited references. In addition, the Applicant has added new claims 21-23. Therefore, the Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and such action is earnestly requested.

Date: 5/8/01

Respectfully submitted,


Jeffrey S. Standley
Registration No. 34,021
Standley & Gilcrest LLP
495 Metro Place South
Suite 210
Dublin, Ohio 43017-5319
Telephone: (614) 792-5555
Fax: (614) 792-5536

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS

New claims 21-23 have been added:

21. (new) The retaining panel of claim 1 wherein the distance from said female connecting portion to said male connecting portion is at least about 24 inches.
22. (new) The retaining panel of claim 14 wherein the distance from said female connecting portion to said male connecting portion is at least about 24 inches.
23. (new) The retaining panel of claim 19 wherein the distance from said female connecting portion to said male connecting portion is at least about 24 inches.